

March 27, 1974

basis that it has worked to a degree. Those are the arguments in favor. Here then are the arguments against very briefly. It sets up another state bureaucracy to solve a problem which individuals should theoretically be solving themselves. Something like 2/3rds of all the people who are found in a drunken condition, once they are approached by the law or once they have a run in with the law, are intimidated by that experience to the degree where they do not allow themselves to become intoxicated beyond control. Or in a position where they would be arrested. And so you're dealing with a very, very small portion of the alcoholic population that this could really do any good for. Finally you're creating as I say a new agency and you're establishing a tax on alcoholism or on the sale of alcoholic beverages which is going to have opposition from you know whom. I personally no longer know in my own mind anyway whether it will or will not work. As I say, I've got enough hours in it. I firmly and totally believed in it when I started on it. The amendments that we have proposed were a rewrite or the eight hundredth rewrite I might say or objections and questions that have come in my mind and other minds. So I would urge we adopt the amendments and then I would give every serious consideration as to how far you want to go. It might work. I honestly don't know. It has worked other places. But understand you are broaching and stepping in a whole new world in an attempt to treat the problem of alcoholism whether it will work is anybody's guess.

PRESIDENT: All right. Senator Barnett, do you have further comment now?

SENATOR BARNETT: Well, Mr. President and members of the Legislature. Just a few things that Senator DeCamp didn't talk on. There's no doubt, there shouldn't be any doubt in anybody's mind that the problem of alcoholism in the State of Nebraska is not being taken care of. And if you are content to continue in the same path that we have been going for years, then I would tell you not to support the bill. We've got to try some new direction. We've got to keep these people out of the jails, the penitentiaries. I'm going to tell you that I've got a couple of things that I think you ought to know. The Southeast Nebraska Health Planning Council sent in support for it. The Lincoln Council on alcoholism and drugs, everybody across the state, is supporting this bill that has any concern with alcoholism. And I received one letter the other day and I'm not going to read the whole thing except the first line -- I'm an alcoholic. And he goes on and there might be a few in the background here too, they're talking loud enough. But we go on a little farther in his last paragraph says were men enough to admit that we are helpless from the disease of alcoholic and we need and ask for help. Instead of spending the tax dollars to keep us incarcerated, why not spend these dollars to help us to return to society to lead a huseful life in our community. This come from the letter from the penitentiary. Now, there's no doubt there'll be some people stand up here but when they do stand here and tell you that we don't need this program, that we're spending millions on the alcoholic, try to bear in mind that these people probably feel that alcoholism should be treated as a crime or the people that told them to oppose it feels that it's a crime. This will put it under a new director, under the Department of Health and get away from the old feeling that the alcoholic